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DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

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SUBJECT: EL-RUFAI: INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS DESTROYING ELECTIONS CREDIBILITY

Classified By: Ambassador John Campbell for reasons 1.4. (b & d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: FCT Minister el-Rufai, depressed, complained about the greed of the PDP in the April 14 elections and acknowledged "some problems" with the elections. But, he said the failure of Nigeria's elections would be the "fault of the international community" for undermining Nigerians' faith in their leadership. In reply, the Ambassador stressed that the April 21 elections should be conducted openly and INEC should strictly adhere to Nigeria's own rules and guidelines in order to bolster faith in the process. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Minister of the Federal Capital Territory Nasir el-Rufai requested a meeting April 19 to brief Ambassador on the state of the nation in the wake of the April 14 Gubernatorial and state elections. El-Rufai was atypically subdued in demeanor and told Ambassador that he had been "depressed." He said that Nigeria would only declare one day for holiday this week since "most Nigerians do not care as much about the Presidential elections as the local elections." He posited that there would be less violence this week, but said that last week's violence had "surprised" the government because it happened in unexpected places.

¶3. (C) El-Rufai expressed his concern about the quality of the elections and acknowledged shortcomings. However, he stated, "it is the reports of the international observers and journalists that are destroying the credibility of the elections." He went on to suggest that it would be the international community's fault if, because of this loss of credibility, "the military takes over." "And I see the signs already," he concluded.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador stressed that the NDI and IRI teams were independent of the USG and that they would report what they see. The Ambassador then highlighted USG concerns over the logistical shortcomings (as covered in White House and DoS statements) and that the entire process should be transparent. The Ambassador stressed that this included collating and reporting of results.

¶5. (C) El-Rufai said that "some" in the PDP had gotten greedy and said that he was aware that "in some states, the votes were set aside and different results written." He said that the results announced in the North were "generally reflective" but that results in the Southwest and Southeast

were fraught with problems. Still, el-Rufai said, "only five or six states had massive irregularities" and he expressed his hope that the courts would still overturn enough results to satisfy the opposition. Even so, el-Rufai stressed, not all of the PDP supporters were very happy about the outcomes.

¶6. (C) El-Rufai claimed that the satellite system for transmitting results "guaranteed" that the results announced were accurate and that people should accept the accuracy. He claimed that "even Buhari said he will not contest the results of the elections." El-Rufai worried that the PDP had "nearly lost" Kaduna, but ventured that the Presidential returns would be different, with the PDP winning even more states, including Kano and Borno. He dismissed any chance of either a loss or a runoff, stating that Nigeria's "opposition is too weak to matter."

¶7. (C) COMMENT: El-Rufai was clearly disturbed by the conduct of the April 14 elections, but would not acknowledge the full scope of the problems encountered. Instead, he clearly wanted to impress that any failure would be the result of the international community undermining confidence in President Obasanjo's and INEC Chairman Iwu's commitment to conduct free and fair elections.

CAMPBELL